

rating is so low. Unfortunately, promises such as this which are broken by the Reid bill do nothing but breed skepticism or cynicism on behalf of the American people.

The Washington Post reported last October that the first Reid bill was written in secret and "behind closed doors." That is the 2,074-page bill we have seen stacked up on our tables. That bill, with sleight of hand, will be swept off the table and a new one will miraculously appear sometime on Saturday. That is the bill we are going to be asked to pass by Christmas—again, without anybody knowing what exactly is in it.

Of course, there is speculation among the press corps and the political class in Washington as to whether the majority leader will be able to get 60 votes on a bill. People are saying: Yes, I think he will get 60 votes. Others say: No, he is missing a few votes; he is not quite there yet. And we are talking about a bill most of us haven't even seen. How in the world can anybody tell their constituents they are for the bill or against the bill before they have had a chance to read it? It is mind-boggling. Yet we know these closed-door meetings are still going on—8 days before Christmas—to work on perhaps a new 2,000-page Reid bill.

I know some of our colleagues were irritated with our colleague from Oklahoma, who asked that the Sanders amendment be read before we actually considered it. Only in Washington, DC, would people be mad about knowing what is in a bill or an amendment before we are asked to vote on it. The American people want to know. They are being excluded, as are many of the rest of us who don't get to know what is being cooked up behind closed doors.

We know these private meetings continue. The President has had meetings with our Democratic colleagues from which Republicans have been excluded. We don't know what kinds of agreements or discussions were occurring behind those closed doors. Certainly, no C-SPAN cameras were allowed.

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Mr. CORNYN. I ask unanimous consent for 2 more minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, we need to have every single Senator look at what is in these bills before we are asked to vote on them.

Let me close on one last issue. The President has also said:

First, I will not sign a plan that adds one dime to our deficits—either now or in the future. Period.

Unfortunately, because of this cynical attitude of Washington and of the political class in Washington toward the public generally, 74 percent of voters said they don't believe that. Seventy-four percent of voters, including 82 percent of Independents, are saying: We don't believe the President of the

United States when he says the bill will not add one dime to the deficit.

One reason they might think that is because of what this Reid bill—at least the 2,000-page variety—says. The Chief Actuary for CMS says that pledge is "unrealistic and doubtful." David Broder, one of the deans of the Washington press corps, said:

These bills, as they stand now, are budget-busters.

I don't know what it is going to take before Congress wakes up and listens to our constituents and the American people. I guess it is going to take another election in 2010 or in 2012 where the American people get to hold us accountable because in the end the American people will get the kind of Congress they want and the kind of Congress they deserve. I hope it will be the kind of Congress that embraces the transparency pledges the President has made and, in reality, lets the American people know what we are doing here and asks whether they approve.

Mr. President, I thank the Chair and yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Dakota is recognized.

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, it is interesting to listen to the discussion on the floor of the Senate. We hear a lot about what is wrong these days. For a moment, let me say that there is a lot right in this country as well.

We are in a deep economic recession. I understand that. This is the deepest recession we have seen since the Great Depression. It is a difficult circumstance. But this country has been in tough circumstances before. The American people are a resilient bunch; they pull themselves up and move forward.

I understand the angst and the concern across this country. I understand the debate in the Chamber about what is wrong. I would be the first to say I don't think either political party is a great bargain sometimes. Both of them have their faults.

I think of that Ogden Nash poem that goes like this:

He drinks because she [scolds],
He thinks she [scolds] because he drinks,
She thinks while neither will admit what's
[really] true that he's a [drunk] and she's a
shrew.

Both political parties, it seems to me, have faults, but both political parties have also contributed to the well-being of this country.

When I hear people say nothing works in America—I answered phones at the front desk yesterday for a while to hear from callers calling in about various things. I heard it on many occasions because a lot of people on the radio and on TV are saying nothing works in America and there is nothing the Federal Government has ever done that works.

The Internet—what a wonderful invention in the life of our planet. Yes, that was created by the Federal Government. Going way back, we brought electricity to America's farms and un-

leashed a barrage of productivity in American agriculture. When you drive around with a locator on the dashboard of your car, that is a GPS satellite—that is the government as well. The Interstate Highway System that connects America—when you drive down big roads that are connecting all of America, that is the Interstate Highway System, suggested by President Dwight D. Eisenhower. What a remarkable thing.

I also think of the story I read a while back about those two little creatures that are crawling around the planet Mars, one called Spirit and one called Opportunity. Five years ago, our country sent both of them to land on the surface of Mars. They landed 1 week apart. They are dune buggy-sized mechanical creatures on the surface of Mars. We sent them up by a rocket. They landed encased in a shroud, and they bounced and the shroud opened up and these dune buggy-sized vehicles began driving on the surface of Mars. They were expected to last 90 days. Five years later, Spirit and Opportunity have been driving on the surface of Mars collecting samples. One of them—I believe Spirit—had an arm that looked as if it was arthritic, so it was hanging at an angle, almost like a salute. The wheel broke, and so they were dragging the wheel and creating a trench. The arm reached back, and the scientist—it takes 9 minutes to send up a signal—the scientist had the arm reach back and dig into the trench so they could get better samples on the surface of Mars. These dune buggies were running on the surface of Mars. Yes, that is the Federal Government and all the contractors.

When somebody said to me that the Federal Government has never done anything right, I said: If you ever get to the Moon, just check the boot prints. They are not Chinese or Russian; they are made by an American astronaut—the one who planted the American flag there.

There is plenty wrong in this country, to be sure, but there is a lot right about this country.

About 9 years ago, at the start of this decade, our country had a budget surplus. Poor Alan Greenspan, the Chairman of the Federal Reserve Board, wasn't able to sleep. He was worried that we were going to pay down the debt too quickly. I assured him he ought to go to sleep peacefully because that is not a problem.

President Bush came to town and said: We are going to do very big tax cuts because it is estimated that we are going to have very big surpluses. I was one on the floor who said maybe we ought not do that. Let's be a little conservative. These surpluses don't exist for the next 10 years yet. They existed that year for the first time in a long time in the year 2000—a budget surplus. President Bush said: No, we are going to begin very large tax cuts right now in anticipation of these surpluses in the future. Some of us said: